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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the attitudes, beliefs, and behavior of Canadian and American children in terms of television viewing of sports, preference for professional or amateur sport models, and proportion of violent to nonviolent television viewing. The written opinionnaire items used in the research determined: 1) demographic information on television viewing habits, 2) personal preferences on professional or amateur sports, and 3) television programs viewed, attitudes of children and parents toward these programs, and the effect of the programs on the children. Differences between Canadian and American children were demonstrated, as well as differences between males and females. Results of the survey are presented in tabular form. (JD)

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# "A Comparative Canadian-American Study on the Effect of Television Athletics and Organized Sport on Children and Youth"

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# A COMPARATIVE CANADIAN-AMERICAN STUDY ON THE EFFECT OF TELEVISED ATHLETICS AND ORGANIZED SPORT ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH.

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This presentation reports the results of a survey study of 268 elementary school children from Windsor, Ontario, Canada and Detroit, Michigan, USA. The sample included parochial and public schools, boys and girls, and children involved and non-involved in organized sports programs.

The written opinionnaire items were based on audio interviews. The opinionnaire was divided into three parts: (1) demographic information and television viewing habits, (2) a personal preference checklist on professional athletic or amateur sports, (3) TV viewing diary recording programs viewed, assessing children and their parents' attitudes towards these programs and finally the effect of these programs upon the children. Among the results were those listed below: (1) boys are more involved than girls in organized sport: (2) sport ranked high among the types of shows viewed by children; (3) baseball and basketball were among the most popular TV shows in the United States, while hockey and baseball ranked highest in Canada; (4) there is a significant difference in items dealing with professional athletics and amateur sport models, surprisingly with Canadians showing more marked preference for professional orientation as compared to American children; (5) children's viewing of television is reinforced by parents; (6) in general, the TV diary showed that the majority of the shows viewed by these children were of a very non-aggressive or non-aggressive

nature; however, the heavy TV viewers did in some instances view more very aggressive or aggressive television shows.

Televised Athletics, Organized Sports, Children/Youth, Comparative, Canadian-American.

Recently, a high level of public concern has reflected the concern to consider the effect of Miss Media and violence in society. Previous research appears to reinforce the popular notion that television is a significant variable in the escalation of aggression and violence in North American society.

A particular problem in the sport/athletic world has been the inability of government agencies to moderate the behavior of professional athletic teams and the level of violence which these organizations and viewing public will tolerate (Moriarty and McCabe, 1976). An example of this is the William R. McMurtory report entitled, "Investigation and Inquiry into Violence in Amateur Hockey" (1974). Although the recommendations contained in this report are laudible, few of these suggestions were implemented and even the most supportive analyst must acknowledge the fact that they have to date had little effect on reducing the level of aggression and violence in either professional or amateur hockey (Moriarty and McCabe, 1976).

The purpose of this study was to investigate by written opinionnaire (based on audio interviews) the attitudes, beliefs and behavior of Canadian and American children in terms of TV viewing, preferance for professional athletic or amateur sport models, and proportion of violent or non violent TV viewing - Sub group analysis included comparison of boys and girls, and participants and none participants.

The opinionnaire was divided into three sections, section 1 provided demographic data (age, sex, grade, school, etc.) and elicited responses as to what type of programs the respondents

liked best to least. Section 2, Project Competition Concern, provided an opportunity for respondents to express their attitudes and beliefs in terms of support for professional athletics (quality greater than quantity) as opposed to amateur/ school sport (quantity greater than quality) by means of thirteen forced choice questions. Section 3, recorded the overall clustered results of the visiting of a sample of television shows which were checked off by the respondents, and then rated by the respondents on the frequency with which they were watched, motivation for viewing, feelings following the show, as well as parental attitudes and behavior in response to the child or youth watching the show.

Television pervades the life of North American children and youth. Throughout elementary, secondary and indeed post secondary education, approximately one-quarter to one-third of the youth's waking hours are spent watching television programming (Atkin and Greenberg, 1976). Efforts have continued to comprehend such implication but only the establishing of an existing causal-effect relationship between television violence and behavior in young viewers has been demonstrated. Though a myriad studies have been conducted in both the United States and Canada, little has dealt with the socially significant crea of sport/athletics, which pervades the life of the vast majority of children on the Canadian/American scene.

Research and Development

Comstock (1977) emphasized the scientific community must as a major priority investigate the role of television in socialization and its influence on human behavior. Much of the related literature deals with 'television violence' and the effect this has on children. Studies in the past four to five years have dealt with pro-social TV content, the political socialization of children, and television's effect of children's reading and school grades. Thus with the association of sport to anti-social activity and violence, it is important to discover the effect television has on children and youth.

Laboratory research has demonstrated that children will become more aggressive after exposure to aggressive programming. This first was shown in experiments conducted in the early sixties (Bendura, Ross and Ross, 1963; Lovcas, 1961; Mussen and Rutherford, 1961). In the next decade studies such as Leifer and Roberts (1972) found similar results. Children who viewed aggression were much more likely than other children to commit aggression themselves. It became clear that the amount of aggression in the program became the significant factor influencing their subsequent behaviour.

Similarity between the setting portrayed on the screen and the child's actual surrounding contributes greatly to influence upon the viewer. The greater the degree of similarity between the two, the more likely the child will imitate the portrayed image (Meyerson, 1966). Another contributing factor is the presence of co-viewers with the child. Kiehs (1968)

reported that children who view an aggressive program with an adult who offers a variety of positive comments about the program, will subsequently show more aggression in a post-test situation with this adult. Other children who had seen the same programs with the same adult, but heard negative evaluations did not elicit as much aggressive behavior.

Recent research on the effects of aggression has moved from experimental situations to those that more clearly reflect the daily lives of children (Friedrich and Stein, 1971). In nearly all cases the studies find increased aggression in the child's normal social interaction after watching television programs containing aggression.

The Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behaviour (1972) cautiously concluded that there is a "preliminary and tentative indication of a causal relation between viewing violence on television and aggressive behavior, limited only to some children and that it operates only in some environmental contexts".

Television and Socially Valued Bahaviors

Investigation has also identified socially valued behavior to be communicated through the television medium. The Children's Television Workshop conducted a series of studies to determine the effectiveness of television as a teacher of cooperative behaviour (Pulson, McDonald and Whittemore, 1972). Children who viewed cooperative segments of 'Sesame Street' were more likely to cooperate and share then children who did not see them. The more minutes of positive social behavior

they viewed, the more likely they were to engage in similar behavior. Unfortunately, researchers did not find that children generalized the positive social behavior to new situations. Friedrich and Stein (1973) found the greater self-control by persisting in tasks, obeying rules and tolerating delays were seen by children who watched 'Mr. Rogers' for four weeks.

Sprafkin (1975) demonstrated children to learn to help others from pro-social content on TV. Collins (1977) supported Sprafkin by discovering children to learn highly generalized prosocial attitudes from television and applying them to new situations.

Studies on prosocial behavior have only taken place in the past five years. Studies in social learning and imitation have supported children to imitate the behavior of models if they see that the bahvior is more rewarding than actions they can think of themselves. The better able the child is to develop his own interests and the broader his own experience, the less susceptible he will be to a model's influence whether that model be a parent, peer or television character. Social learning is a complex long term process and it is difficult for the social scientist to attribute changes in behavior and attitudes, to any one particular experience of life's many.

The television industry is controlled by economics and as such is very reluctant to change its scheduling (Leifer, 1974). However, recent workshops have been established to help translate the multitude of research findings to definite policy and action.

Concern has been expressed to derive the greatest value and benefit from television programming. Television content will not change quickly but programs and input from social scientists can possibly help to dictate some of the program planning.

One vital question is to what values do we want our children exposed? Some will argue that our world is competitive and aggressive, and to survive one must develop these traits. These may be the values that are an end-product, but for young children (12 and under) they should be allowed to develop competencies and self-determination so that they are mature enough to handle later competition. Therefore incorporating the nuturity level of children will permit also, in introduction of varying competitive levels.

Television has become one of our greatest socializing devils in our society. The Royal Commissioned Study on Violence in the Communications Industry "(1976) the researchers concluded that in televised sport exposure to pro-social programming has a greater effect on the behavior of children than does anti-social programming. Similar results were reported in England ( , ). This contradicts the popular literature but presents an optimistic future for the research of prosocial behavior. Therefore if prosocial television does influence children, then an effort should be made to televise more prosocial type of sport behavior.

Organization of Sport

Findings have implicated highly organized sport at a young age (12 and under) can have a detrimental antisocial effect on

children (Eaves, 1979). The sport practitioner must be aware of the psychological effect competition may have on children and youth. Studies at the University of Windsor are taking place to see what the effects of highly competitive hockey leagues have on personality development.

Competitiveness and aggressive behavior are a part of our society and it is the people within that society that will determine the values that children will develop. Thus we as professionals in the related field must demonstrate pro and antisocial effects toward behavior and incorporate these within our value system.

Professional sport is an entity organized to make money. And therefore will subscribe to behavior that encourages such growth. Does this professional model present an image which minor hockey can follow? Or do we as individuals stress the skill and personality attainment thus screening and modifying the behavior of children and youth.

Television provides a medium to which we may broadcast societal values. Thus it is essential to measure pro-social and anti-social effect and how they may effect a program surrounded by the competitive atmosphere.

## Treatment of the Data

The results of this analysis were recorded on actual copies of the opinionnaire for each of the groups listed below:

a. overall results, N=27, including all subjects from Canada and the United States
b. Canada N=84
c. USA N=183

d. Male N=136
e. Female N=131
f. Participant N=155
g. Non-Participant N=112

Identification of Sport/Athletic Participation and TV Viewing

Question 1 (Q1) The age of the 268 respondents of the overall opinionnaire ranged from eleven through fifteen with a mean of 13.12 yrs., and a standard deviction of plus or minus .787. The median age was _____ and the most frequently occurring age was _____.

Question 2 (Q2) The respondents for this opinionnaire were 137 males and 131 females.

Question 3 (Q3) The respondents were grade 7 and 8 students from four school in the Detroit-Windsor area. Two schools of parochial/separate affiliation and two schools of public affiliation.

Question 4 (Q4) The respondents were asked if they participated in an organized sport with schedules and playoffs. Of N=155 who do, Baseball (26%), Basketball (24%), Softball (10%), Hockey (8%) were the most heavily ranked participative sports.

Question 5 (Q5) When the respondents were asked what do you 'like most' about sport, they ranked 'excitement' first (29%), 'competition' second (25%), 'exercise' third (22%), 'friendship' fourth (10%), 'spectatorship' fifth (6%), 'aggression' and 'tension' sixth (4%), and 'educational' and 'sportsmanship' seventh (2%).

Question 6 (Q6) When the respondents were asked what do you 'like least' about sport, they ranked 'violence' first (24%), 'losing' second (17%), 'time' third (16%), 'pressure' fourth (13%), 'tiring' fifth (8%), 'boring' sixth (6%), 'officiating' and 'cheating' seventh (5%), and 'poor equipment' eighth (2%).

Question 7 (Q7) When asked the number of hours per week that the respondents watched TV during the summer, the average was 25.211 hrs. with a standard deviction of 18.140 hours. The hours watched ranged from 1 hr. to 99 hours.

Question 8 (Q8) For the most part, the children and youth watched TV in the 'evening' (77%), with afternoon second (12%) and 'morning' third with (11%).

Question 9 (Q9) In terms of TV viewing habits during the 'winter' the average increased to 30.280 hours, with a standard deviction of 18.5 hours and the hours watched ranged from 3 to 99 hours.

Question 10 (Q10) The time of viewing assimilated those of the winter with children and youth viewing mostly in the 'evening' (83%), with afternoon second (12%) and 'morning' third with (4%).

Question 11 (Q11) On this question, the respondents were asked to rank the types of shows they like best. As can be seen they liked 'comedy' first (38%), 'sport' second (27%), 'mystery' third (14%), 'adventure' fourth (9%), 'cartoons' fifth (7%) and drama sixth (6%).

Question 12 (Q12) Respondents were asked to list their first priority on sport shows shown regularly on TV. The most popular sport programs were ranked 'baseball' first (33%), 'basketball' second (15%), then'curling', 'football', 'hockey' and 'tennis', third at (11%), 'bowling' fourth (6%), 'golf' fifth (4%), and wrestling sixth at (2%).

Question 13 (Q13) Question 13 required the respondents to rank the sport program shown occassionally on TV. The first choice ranking showed 'gymnastics' first (26%), 'boxing' second (20%), 'swimming' third (15%), 'soccer' fourth (12%), 'skiing' fifth (10%), 'track & field' and 'boxing' sixth (6%) and 'volleyball' and 'synchro-swimming' seventh (3%).

## Project Competition Concern

The overall response on the Professional Athletic-Amateur Sport Forced Choice Opinionnaire showed four responses categories indicating amateur sport, i.e., an objective to 'pertake for fun' (57%); scheduling emphasis focusing on 'local and league competition' (58%); with an attitude that 'it doesn't matter if you win or lose, but how you play the game' (88%); and the overall philosophy that 'a game worth playing is worth playing even if poorly' (55%).

The nine remaining items showed a preference for professional athletic identification terms such as the 'ultimate goal' to win (64%); an overall aim to 'specialize' (64%); with rewards in 'the form of banquets and trophies' (67%); commitment of time for 'practices and games in excess of six hours' (60%); an emphasis on playing the best most often (71%); rule application which favored 'letter of the law and gamesmanship' (70%); evaluation of league success by standings and competitors' calibre' (67%); decision making at the 'national' level (78%); and the growth rate of the child be considered through 'control and rapid development' (78%).

The dominences of professional athletics responses over amateur sport reponses far exceeds the obsolute simple majority of nine over four. Analysis of the percentage of difference in agreement shows that in those instances where amateur sport responses were selected the sum of % difference in agreement was (116%), as contrasted with the professional athletic responses where the sum of % of difference was (350%).

## TV Viewing Diary - Habits and Feelings

The third section of the opinionnaire records the overall clustered results of the listing of a sample of TV shows which were checked off by the respondents, and then rated by the respondents on the frequency with which they were watched, motivation for viewing, feelings following the show, as well as parental attitudes and behavior in response to the child or youth watching the show. All respondents were requested

to complete a diary and provided with TV schedules for that past Saturday's television programming. The respondents checked off the shows which they watch and then recorded each show and responded to each question in terms of that show. This provided a diary by which respondents could indicate which shows they had watched the previous day.

The various shows listed were subsequently ranked by a panel of experts (children and youth in the age range of the subjects) on a semantic scale running from very non-aggressive, to non-aggressive, to neutral, to aggressive, to very aggressive.

From the TV schedule provided the respondents listed a total of sixteen programs were listed from the first (001) to the

PROGRAM LISTED

| TV PROGRAM | VAGG | AGG | NEU | NAGG | VNAGG | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 001 | 6 | 6 | 17 | 32 | 38 | N=268 |
| 002 | 7 | 7 | 18 | 37 | 31 | N=249 |
| 003 | 9 | 13 | 23 | 39 | 17 | N=234 |
| 004 | 8 | 12 | 33 | 38 | 10 | N=221 |
| 005 | 8 | 17 | 34 | 35 | 7 | N=199 |
| 006 | 8 | 16 | 37 | 35 | 5 | N=174 |
| 007 | 9 | 15 | 32 | 39 | 5 | N=147 |
| 008 | 5 | 14 | 37 | 39 | 6 | N=125 |
| 009 | 5 | 10 | 36 | 47 | 1 | N=97 |
| 010 | 10 | 12 | 28 | 44 | 6 | N=68 |
| 011 | 6 | 18 | 49 | 26 | 2 | N=51 |
| 012 | 3 | 16 | 32 | 43 | 5 | N=37 |
| 013 | 4 | 11 | 25 | 0 | 61 | N=28 |
| 014 | 10 | 15 | 25 | 0 | 50 | N=20 |
| 015 | 29 | 0 | 36 | 0 | 35 | N=14 |
| 016 | 13 | 0 | 38 | 38 | 11 | N=8 |

sixteenth (016). Correspondingly viewership declined from an N=268 for program 001, to N=8 for program 016. The data indicated however that most of the programs viewed fall into the neutral to very non-aggressive end of the continuum.

The viewing habits of the respondents proved very unpredictable as no clear indication statistically presented ingrained attitudes (see I watch this show). Generally the respondents viewed the programs because, (a) it's funny; (b) for action; and (c) because the program was interesting (see 'I watch this show Because').

I WATCH THIS SHOW

| TV PROGRAM | ALWAYS | SOMETIMES |
|---|---|---|
| 001 | 35 | 64 |
| 002 | 46 | 54 |
| 003 | 45 | 54 |
| 004 | 42 | 58 |
| 005 | 46 | 54 |
| 006 | 49 | 49 |
| 007 | 53 | 47 |
| 008 | 50 | 50 |
| 009 | 53 | 46 |
| 010 | 54 | 43 |
| 011 | 51 | 49 |
| 012 | 41 | 57 |
| 013 | 50 | 50 |
| 014 | 50 | 50 |
| 015 | 43 | 57 |
| 016 | 43 | 57 |

Parental viewing habits make a definite change from an attitude of 'don't care' and 'don't watch the program' to an attitude of 'like it' and 'watch it', the program their children are viewing. This result is emphasized specifically in the TV005 to TV012 program listed, indicating possibly the prime time nature of the programs. (see when this show comes on.....).

I WATCH THIS SHOW BECAUSE

| TV PROGRAM | FUNNY | ACTION | MYSTERY | INTEREST | ACTING |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 001 | 54 | 20 | 5 | 17 | 4 |
| 002 | 49 | 27 | 7 | 15 | 2 |
| 003 | 39 | 30 | 6 | 21 | 4 |
| 004 | 43 | 21 | 10 | 23 | 3 |
| 005 | 40 | 25 | 9 | 20 | 6 |
| 006 | 38 | 27 | 10 | 21 | 4 |
| 007 | 32 | 24 | 14 | 27 | 3 |
| 008 | 37 | 22 | 10 | 25 | 5 |
| 009 | 41 | 16 | 11 | 30 | 2 |
| 010 | 44 | 15 | 9 | 21 | 12 |
| 011 | 34 | 14 | 22 | 29 | 2 |
| 012 | 22 | 14 | 24 | 35 | 5 |
| 013 | 32 | 25 | 11 | 25 | 7 |
| 014 | 40 | 25 | 10 | 25 | 0 |
| 015 | 23 | 31 | 15 | 23 | 8 |
| 016 | 14 | 29 | 14 | 43 | 0 |

Finally, the respondents after viewing the show tend most to feel happy ( ) or neutral ( ) after viewing the program. However an increase in happiness is noted in the latter programs TV010 to TV016 listed (see after watching this show I feel.....).

WHEN THIS SHOW COMES ON MY PARENTS.....

| TV PROGRAM | LIKE IT | DON'T LIKE | DON'T CARE |
|---|---|---|---|
| 001 | 35 | 10 | 55 |
| 002 | 40 | 10 | 50 |
| 003 | 48 | 10 | 42 |
| 004 | 53 | 11 | 36 |
| 005 | 56 | 13 | 31 |
| 006 | 62 | 10 | 28 |
| 007 | 59 | 5 | 36 |
| 008 | 56 | 10 | 34 |
| 009 | 65 | 10 | 25 |
| 010 | 69 | 6 | 25 |
| 011 | 55 | 18 | 27 |
| 012 | 54 | 14 | 32 |
| 013 | 68 | 11 | 21 |
| 014 | 65 | 25 | 10 |
| 015 | 71 | 14 | 15 |
| 016 | 57 | 14 | 29 |

| WATCH IT | DON'T WATCH IT |
|---|---|
| 33 | 67 |
| 43 | 57 |
| 46 | 54 |
| 52 | 48 |
| 53 | 47 |
| | |
| 58 | 42 |
| 53 | 47 |
| 68 | 32 |
| 63 | 37 |
| 62 | 38 |
| 70 | 30 |
| 68 | 32 |
| 60 | 40 |
| 79 | 21 |
| 57 | 43 |

ATFER WATCHING THIS SHOW I FEEL.....

| TV PROGRAM | HAPPY | NEUTRAL | SAD |
|---|---|---|---|
| 001 | 53 | 47 | 0 |
| 002 | 60 | 39 | 1 |
| 003 | 59 | 38 | 3 |
| 004 | 65 | 33 | 2 |
| 005 | 64 | 33 | 3 |
| 006 | 61 | 36 | 3 |
| 007 | 57 | 40 | 3 |
| 008 | 58 | 40 | 2 |
| 009 | 62 | 34 | 4 |
| 010 | 68 | 24 | 8 |
| 011 | 63 | 33 | 4 |
| 012 | 70 | 19 | 11 |
| 013 | 57 | 36 | 7 |
| 014 | 70 | 20 | 10 |
| 015 | 57 | 36 | 7 |
| 016 | 71 | 29 | 0 |

## Cross-Tabulated Results

### Canada-USA

A cross-tabulated comparison revealed Canadians and Americans to differ on, 'the sport they played', ' what they liked best about sport' and the 'type of regular sport program they viewed'. Canadians listed 'basketball' (26%), 'baseball' and 'hockey' (10%) and soccer (10%) as the sports they played regularily. American respondents listed 'baseball' (32%), 'basketball' (22%), 'softball' (16%) and 'volleyball' (8%) as the sports they played regularly.

On ranking what they 'liked best about sport' the greatest differences were found, in that only 19% of American respondents compared to 33% of Canadians disliked 'violence', 17% of Americans to 6% of Canadians disliked the associated 'pressures' and 2% American to 12% Canadians disliked 'cheating' within sport.

Canadians indicated a greater professional athletic orientation demonstrating a greater propensity to 'win', 'commitment of time', 'player selection', 'scheduling emphasis' and 'growth rate of the child' Americans only in the 'reward' systems associated with sport demonstrated a great professional orientation.

The TV Viewing Diary revealed the American respondents to view programs tending toward the more aggressive end of the continuum, and if not aggressive to be more extremist (VNAGG or VAGG). Other notible differences suggested the parents of American children and youth to 'watch' and 'like' the show their children were viewing. Whereas Canadian parents 'did

not care' and 'did not watch' the show their children were viewing.

Male-Female

Both males and females corresponded on what they 'liked best about sport' for the first three choices (excitement, competition, exercise), however, their fourth choice differed in that males sought sport activity for 'aggressive' tendencies while females preferred the 'friendship' associated with sport. The 'type of show' they preferred to view also differed as males preferred 'sport', 'comedy', and 'adventure' in that order while females preferred 'comedy', 'mystery' and 'drama'.

The competition concern responses demonstrated females to possess a greater professional orientation. Females showed a greater propensity to 'win', to go by the 'letter of the law' and be evaluated through the ranking of 'standings'.

From the TV Diary the cross-tabulated scores indicated females to have a tendency to view more programs that are plotted on the 'very aggressive' end of the VAGG to VNAGG continuum. The parents of females however, possessed a greater tendency to 'like' the program that their daughters were viewing and 'watch it' with them.

Participant - Non-Participant

Participants and non-participants differed in what they 'liked' about sport. Participants enjoyed the 'competition', 'excitement', 'exercise' and the 'friendship' associated with sport. Non-participants on the other hand liked 'excitement', 'exercise', 'spectatorship' and 'competition'. They also differed in the type of program they preferred to view, participants ranked 'sport', 'comedy' and 'mystery' as their favourite

programs. Non-participants ranked 'comedy', 'sport', and 'adventure' as their favourite programs to watch.

On the project competition concern participants exhibited a greater professional orientation. Participants demonstrated a greater emphasis to be placed on 'rewards' and to commitment of practice time 'six hours or more'.

No significant findings were found in this cross-tabulation, however some general tendencies were depicted:

1) as television viewing increases, participants tended to view programs ranked as 'aggressive' or 'very aggressive'

2) both watch the show because (a) it's funny; (b) the action; and, (c) of the interest; and

3) in the later listed programs non-participant parents 'like' and 'watch' the programs their children view.

## Summary

The results of this piloted opinionnaire served two major purposes: (1) Demonstrated that there are differences between Canadian and American children and youth, and, also, difference exists between the sub-groups (participant non-participant and male-female). (2) Descriptive data on the sports/athletic and TV viewing habits, preference and feelings of the children/ youth.

General conclusions can be drawn.

(1) Children participate in sport/athletics for the 'excitement', 'competition', 'exercise' and 'friendship' associated with the activity.

(2) Children dislike 'violence', 'losing', 'time' and the 'pressure' associated with organized sport.

(3) In terms of the sport/athletic participation the majority favor the professional athletic model as opposed to the amateur sport model.

(4) The higher the number of aggregate listed in the TV viewing diary, the higher the probability that the shows will be more aggressive.

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